

# **Workplace Safety and Violence Prevention**

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# Workplace Safety / Violence Prevention

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## Overview

- ✦ Mindset of Awareness
  - ✦ Workplace Violence
    - Definition
    - Myths
  - ✦ Behaviors of Concern
- ✦ Commitment to Action
  - ✦ Formula
  - ✦ Action Point
  - ✦ Common Inhibitors to Reporting
  - ✦ Available Reporting Options
  - ✦ Office Safety
  - ✦ Crisis Response

# **Workplace Safety / Violence Prevention**

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## ***Why Train on This Topic?***

According to the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), 2 million assaults and threats of violence against Americans at work occur annually. This includes 396,000 aggravated assaults, 51,000 rapes and sexual assaults, 84,000 robberies, and 1,000 homicides. In addition to assaults and threats, a substantial number of employers report being bullied or harassed on the job.

# Workplace Safety / Violence Prevention

## ***Why Train on This Topic?***

One out of every six violent crimes occurs in the workplace. And while workplace homicides grab the headlines... (homicide is the fourth leading cause of death on the job and the number one killer of women in the workplace)... other forms of workplace violence happen much more frequently.



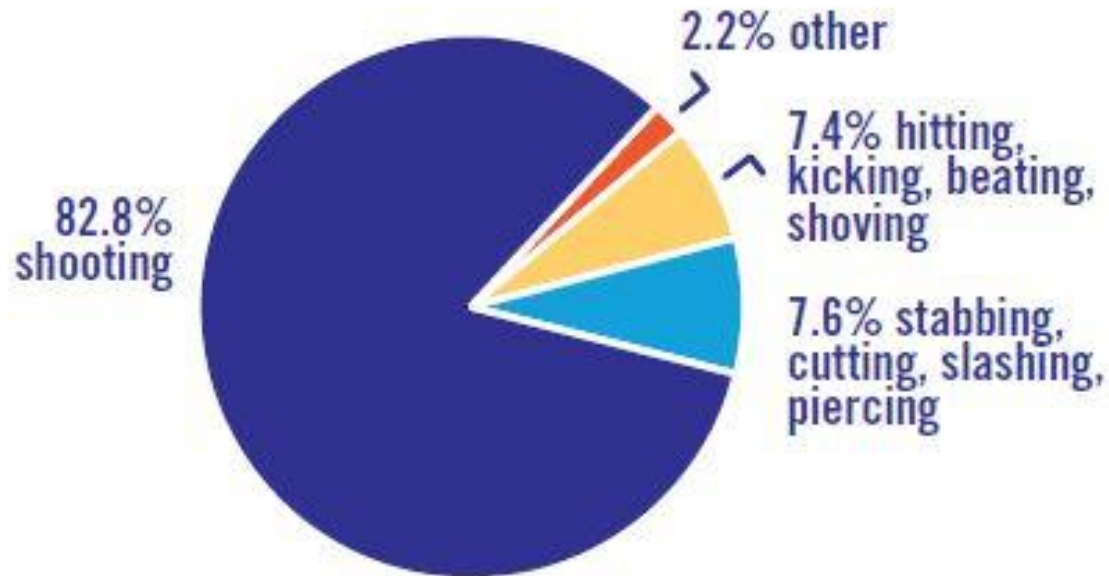
# **Workplace Safety / Violence Prevention**

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## ***Why Train on This Topic?***

No organization, regardless of size or type of business, is immune to workplace violence. Acceptance of this fact is the precursor of a committed mindset. Individuals can and do make a difference. Individual employees are the backbone of any effective workplace violence prevention program.

## WORKPLACE HOMICIDE BY TYPE OF CRIME, 2012



*Bureau of Labor Statistics*

While homicides in general and at the workplace in particular are rare, workplace homicide is the fourth-leading cause of fatal occupational injury. The majority of workplace homicides are shootings committed by robbers. Despite the overall drop in workplace homicides, the number of workplace homicides of government employees has increased.

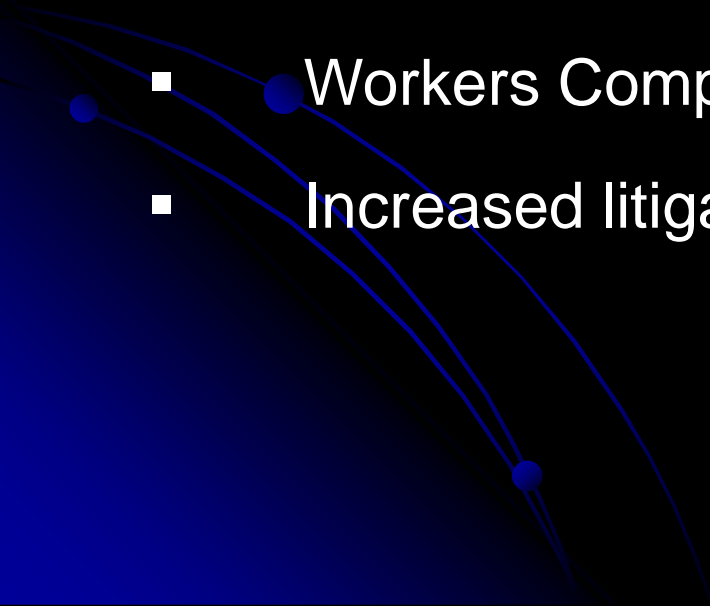
# Workplace Safety / Violence Prevention

## ***Why be Concerned?***

- Physical and psychological harm to employees
- Loss of a sense of security
- Harm to an employer's reputation in the community
- Damage to employee morale and productivity
- Employers face large economic losses

# Workplace Safety / Violence Prevention

## ***Financial Impact on Employers***

- Workplace violence costs an estimated \$121 billion a year nationwide.
  - Increased insurance costs
  - Workers Compensation claims
  - Increased litigation
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# Workplace Violence

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There's no federal law establishing an employer's duty to prevent workplace violence.

However, under the OSH Act, an employer has a duty to provide a safe working environment.

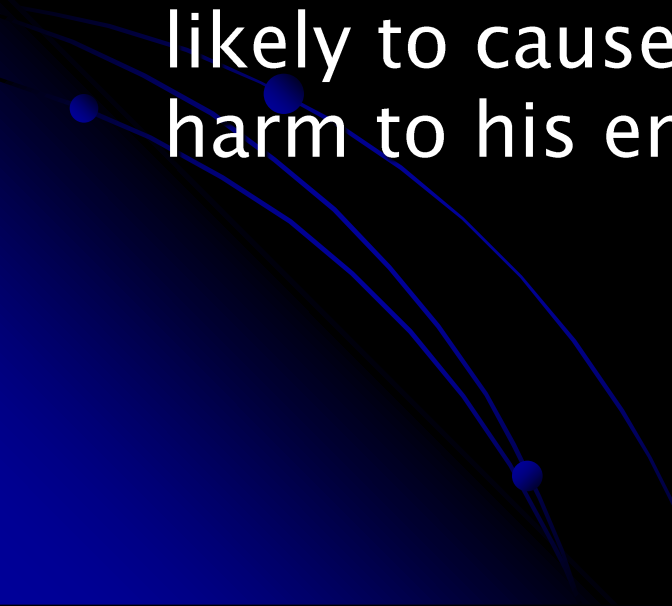
*In general, an employee who acts violently is acting outside the scope of their employment thereby making them a liability.*

# Workplace Violence

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## *The General Duty Clause*

“Each employer shall furnish to each of his employees employment which is free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to his employees.”



# Workplace Violence

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- ◆ Behaviors that can cause:
  - ✦ Personal injury
  - ✦ Damage property
  - ✦ Impede the normal course of work
  - ✦ Cause workers/managers/customers to fear for their safety

# Workplace Violence

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## ✦ Includes:

✦ Threats

✦ Harassment

✦ Intimidation

✦ Bullying

✦ Assault

✦ Stalking

✦ Domestic Violence

✦ Workplace Homicides

**Anger in the workplace is the leading cause of terminations cited ahead of job incompetence.**

◇ Merely represent the "tip of the iceberg"



# Workplace Violence

## Four broad categories:

- **TYPE 1:** Violent acts by criminals who have no other connection with the workplace, but enter to commit robbery or another crime
- **TYPE 2:** Violence directed at employees by customers, clients, patients, students, or others to whom services are provided
- **TYPE 3:** Violence against coworkers, supervisors, or managers by a present or former employee
- **TYPE 4:** Violence committed in the workplace by someone who doesn't work there, but has a personal relationship with an employee—an abusive spouse or domestic partner

# Myths

## Gunman 'just snapped' before heading to Omaha mall

Article | Comments (40)

AMY FORLITI

The Associated Press

December 7, 2007 at 6:34 PM EDT

OMAHA, Neb. — The gunman who killed eight people in a mall shooting “just snapped,” he said in a hand-scrawled suicide note released Friday that combines love for his friends and family with nothing but contempt for his random victims.

“I know everyone will remember me as some sort of monster but please understand that I just don't want to be a burden on the ones that I care for my entire life,” 19-year-old Robert Hawkins wrote. “I just want to take a few pieces of (expletive) with me.”

Police released the three-page note Friday.

- ◆ “Out of the blue...”
- ◆ “Just snapped...”
- ◆ “If left alone, events will resolve themselves...”
- ◆ “Employees can’t do anything to stop it...”
- ◆ It couldn’t happen here...”

# Factors That Promote Violence

- Violent Employees / Clients
- Substance Abuse
- Radical Management Practices
- Management Intimidation
- Minority Resentment
- Revenge
- Heightened Media Coverage
- Financial Gain / Loss

An American Psychological Assn. study indicates that 71% of those surveyed experienced hostile, threatening or offensive behavior on the job over a three year period. And most surprising of all, most of those had not complained to anyone. They just held it in and kept silent. Just imagine the toll in stress, lost productivity, absenteeism, and employee turnover.

[https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/noinourtown?source=feed\\_text&story\\_id=1012693338771524](https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/noinourtown?source=feed_text&story_id=1012693338771524)

# Violence Prone Personality Traits

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- Persons with a violent history.
- Employees/clients who develop mental illness.
- Individuals who develop into a “problem” employee/client.
- Anger. Expresses a need for revenge.
- Age 30 – 50
- Loner/lives alone or with a parent
- Almost always committed by a male rather than a female.
- Shallow interpersonal relationships.
- Blames others for their problems.
- Workplace romance ends (Love Triangle)

# Behaviors of Concern

WARNING!

- ✦ There are behaviors that suggest the potential for future violence. Pay attention to cues that may indicate distress or discontent.
- ✦ If there's a behavior that makes you uncomfortable, it's best to listen to what may be an intuitive warning
  - If you see something or sense something, say something
  - May be an innocent explanation for behavior
  - if left unaddressed, could escalate and contribute to a toxic work environment



# Behaviors of Concern

WARNING!

- ◆ The following may alert supervisors to potential problems
  - ✦ Threats, frequent aggressive outbursts, or excessive displays of temper
  - ✦ History of threats/violent acts
  - ✦ Ominous fascination with weapons and/or references to weapons, violent media content, or violent events
  - ✦ Communications of despair and hopelessness.
  - ✦ Uses various forms of intimidation.
  - ✦ Dealing with a divorce or separation.

# Behaviors of Concern

WARNING!

- ✦ Verbal abuse of co-workers and customers, or harassment through phone calls or emails
- ✦ Bizarre comments or behavior, including violent content
- ✦ Holding grudges, inability to handle criticism, making excuses, and blaming others
- ✦ Chronic, hypersensitive complaints about persecution
- ✦ Making jokes or offensive comments about violent acts
- ✦ Obsession with job, but little involvement with other employees.
- ✦ Difficulty accepting authority or trouble with supervisor.



# Behaviors of Concern

WARNING!

## - Sadness -

- ◆ Some Behaviors of Concern, such as sadness, might not look like they could lead to a Flash Point
- ◆ What begins as sadness may evolve into a serious depression and the potential for suicide
  - ◆ Suicide is aggression turned inward; wherein homicide is aggression turned outward





# Behaviors of Concern

- ◆ Do not focus on “snapshots”
  - ◆ No one behavior suggests a greater level of threat; significant changes in patterns of behavior are far more telling
- ◆ Employee is sending out a personal “SOS” distress signal
- ◆ Learn to recognize the signals that could point in the direction of violence and then learn to respond to them



*(Frequency, duration, and intensity are critical criteria when evaluating Behaviors of Concern)*

# Behaviors of Concern

## - Stalking -

- ◆ Pattern of harassing behaviors intended to frighten, intimidate, terrorize, or injure another person



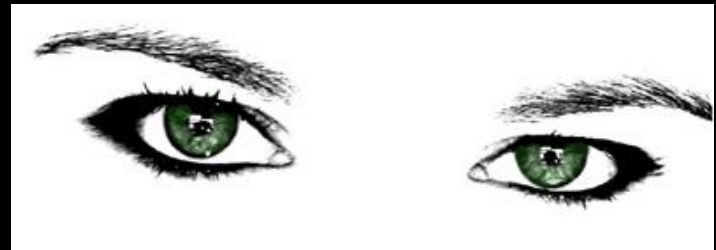
- ◆ Primary motives for stalking include power, control, and possession
- ◆ Offenders refuse to accept the end of the former relationship (real or perceived)
- ◆ When the victim spurns their unwelcome advances, the stalker often turns to intimidation

# Behaviors of Concern

WARNING!

## - Domestic Violence -

- ◆ Pattern of behavior in which one intimate partner controls another through the use of:
  - ◆ Physical violence
  - ◆ Coercion
  - ◆ Intimidation
  - ◆ Threats
  - ◆ Isolation
  - ◆ Emotional, sexual, or economic abuse
- ◆ Affects nearly one out of four women in today's workplace



# Behaviors of Concern

WARNING!

## - Domestic Violence -



- ✦ Anxiety and lack of concentration on the job
- ✦ Unexplained bruises or injuries
- ✦ Inappropriate clothing for the time of year
- ✦ Frequent work absences
- ✦ Unplanned use of personal time
- ✦ Disruptive visits to the workplace by a current or former intimate partner

### ✦ Employees may observe behaviors which might suggest violence at home

- ✦ Disruptive phone calls and emails at work
- ✦ Discomfort when communicating with others

# Behaviors of Concern

WARNING!

## - Domestic Violence -

Many employers, as part of their workplace violence prevention program, have a “No Threats, No Violence” policy. A requirement of that policy is for any employee who obtains an order of protection to report that information to the appropriate individual within the organization so procedures can be instituted to protect the safety of that employee, as well as ensure the safety of other employees in the organization.





# Triggering Event

- ✦ A reprimand, termination, or layoff
- ✦ Financial troubles, a separation, a divorce, or a death
- ✦ A loss, whether real or perceived, in someone's personal or professional life
- ✦ “Injustice collectors”
  - ✦ Will not forget or forgive those wrongs or the people he believes are responsible





# Commitment to Action

# Action Point

- ◆ Recognition that violence may be an outcome; respond with an appropriate action
- ◆ Important to exercise caution when setting an early Action Point
  - ✦ Important not to delay reporting a threat
    - Better chance of containing a potentially violent event
    - Minimize harmful consequences and prevent a recurrence
  - ✦ Stress tolerance and coping skills are highly subjective



# Common Inhibitors



- ◆ Lack of awareness
  - ✦ Not trained to recognize Behaviors of Concern
- ◆ Psychological barriers
  - ✦ Busybody or snitch
- ◆ Fear of retaliation
- ◆ Believe it is someone else's responsibility
  - ✦ If a flash point is triggered, it will affect you

# Reporting Options

- ◆ For lower level behaviors, might feel comfortable giving person a chance to talk or vent

- ◆ Report behavior to person in authority:
  - ✦ Supervisor, Human Resources, Security, Employee Assistance
  - ✦ 24/7 Tip Lines
  - ✦ Suggestion Box, Emails, Texting
  - ✦ Ombudsman
  - ✦ Ethics Hotline
  - ✦ Strength in numbers--team up





Tom

Tom says, "I hate this ###&% company! I've given them 15 years of my life, and now I can't believe that I didn't get the promotion! I'll get back at them if it's the last thing I ever do!"

If I heard Tom make this remark, I would:

- A. Ignore it. He's probably just blowing off steam.
- B. Tell him to stop badmouthing the company and making threats. It does not help anyone.
- C. Take it seriously. I'd contact Human Resources right away that we might have a problem on our hands.
- D. Tell Tom to calm down.



Tom

Tom says, "I hate this #\*&% company! I've given them 15 years of my life, and now I can't believe that I didn't get the promotion! I'll get back at them if it's the last thing I ever do!"

If I heard Tom make this remark, I would:

### **C. Take it seriously**

Correct! Take it seriously. This is a clear example of a real threat of violence. Studies show that individuals who commit workplace violence often believe that something very important (a job promotion, a raise, or a transfer) has been unfairly taken from them. They feel that the organization has an obligation to provide them with this job promotion, raise, transfer, etc. If that individual believes he was treated unfairly he or she wants to "get even." They may be willing to risk everything, even when there is the possibility of injury to co-workers or themselves.

Review question





Mary: "I don't know what I'm going to do. My ex-husband has been threatening me. He calls a dozen times a day. He even tried to break into my house last night. He badgers me at work. I'm afraid to call the cops. Then he might really get mad."

If Mary mentioned this to you, you would advise her to:

- A. Reconcile with her husband.
- B. Go to Employee Assistance or Human Resources. You should consider the threat to be serious.
- C. Do nothing. The less that is said and done, the better.
- D. Suggest that Mary call the police.



Mary: "I don't know what I'm going to do. My ex-husband has been threatening me. He calls a dozen times a day. He even tried to break into my house last night. He badgers me at work. I'm afraid to call the cops. Then he might really get mad."

If Mary mentioned this to you, you would advise her to:

### **B. Go to HR**

Correct! If your organization has an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or a Human Resources department, now would be a good time to tell Mary to ask them for help in dealing with her violent ex-husband. They may be able to advise her as to how she should handle the situation. This would also be a good time to get law enforcement involved. Mary's ex-husband has displayed violent behavior and this must be taken seriously.

[Review question](#)





One day, Jim overhears a manager, Lynne, yelling at her assistant Bill. She was screaming "How many times do I have to tell you, you **MUST** give me all my phone messages immediately. How else can I possibly keep in touch with my clients if I don't know that they called." One more mistake like this, and you are fired! What should Jim do?



- A. Notify Human Resources that Lynne is showing signs of violent behavior toward her assistant.
- B. March right into Lynne's office and tell her she has no right to yell at anyone in the office.
- C. Do nothing; this is a situation that Lynne has to work out with Bill. It does not warrant any action.
- D. Tell Bill that he should quit before Lynne fires him.



One day, Jim overhears a manager, Lynne, yelling at her assistant Bill. She was screaming "How many times do I have to tell you, you **MUST** give me all my phone messages immediately. How else can I possibly keep in touch with my clients if I don't know that they called." One more mistake like this, and you are fired! What should Jim do?

### C. Do nothing...

While this may seem like the right answer, remember that you should use common sense when reporting workplace violence. Lynne was mad at Bill and she raised her voice. While this was not an ideal response, it is something that happens in every workplace. Most of the time, it does not rise to the level of workplace violence.

Review question



# Workplace Violence Formula

***Awareness + Action = Prevention***

- ✦ You can do something about many situations
- ✦ Action has to be appropriate
- ✦ Without awareness and willingness to act, you truly become vulnerable

# Reduce the Threat

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- ✓ Establish a clear policy that makes any workplace harassment, threats, or physical violence a very serious matter.
- ✓ Train employees how to recognize the signs and how to mediate disputes.
- ✓ Provide an outlet for employees to vent their concerns or grievances.
- ✓ Provide professional counseling through an Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

# Office Safety

## Diffuse & Report Incidents

- Remain calm and pleasant with irate callers, customers or coworkers --- You stay safer and more in control by not stooping to their level.
- Try to listen to what the person is saying. Make it clear that you can only help if they themselves stay calm.
- Be aware of your tone, body position, and implied or actual threats.
- If it's clear that you are not going to be able to assist the person, call for a supervisor.
- Document the incident as soon as possible or call the police department if necessary.

# In a Confrontation...

- Evaluate the threat and the ability of the perpetrator to carry out the threat.
- Use calming, quiet language.
- Encourage the perpetrator to sit down and talk it out. Most workplace violence can be averted just by getting the perpetrator to sit down.
- Offer the customer/client some cold water and invite them to sit and discuss the problem.
- Offer solutions and empathy; do not argue.
- If the confrontation turns physical, consider your options.
- Yelling, screaming to attract attention might work in a stranger attack situation.
- Appear to be cooperative and wait for an out

# In a Confrontation...

- Negotiate (take my car keys, let me go)
- Comply (armed robbery)
- Prepare to physically resist if necessary
- If you choose to physically resist, you must be prepared to injure the subject and go all the way
- You can't start to physically resist, stop, then try another tactic
- Use items at your disposal as weapons – stapler, heavy flashlight, high heeled shoe etc...
- Hit or kick the attacker in vulnerable areas – eyes, nose, throat, groin, shin, feet
- If one technique isn't working , try another

# Creating a Safe and Caring Work Environment

## *Promoting Care, Welfare, Safety, and Security*

### ***Consider Objects That Could Be Used as Weapons***

Be aware of objects in your immediate work area that could be used as weapons if someone becomes angry and violent. Be prepared to remove or secure any objects that may be thrown or used as weapons if a disruptive situation begins to escalate.

For example:

- General office supplies (pens/pencils, scissors, staplers, etc.)
- Medical supplies (thermometers, stethoscopes, blood pressure cuffs, etc.)
- Cleaning supplies (brooms, mops, buckets, etc.)
- Computers and other work-related equipment
- Nametags or identification cards with pins
- Books or manuals
- Patient charts or clipboards
- Food trays
- Cups, glasses, plates, utensils
- Telephones
- Electrical cords
- Other objects or equipment specific to your work environment



Care  
Welfare  
Safety  
Security™



# Creating a Safe and Caring Work Environment

## *Promoting Care, Welfare, Safety, and Security*

### ***Assess Your Work Environment***

The physical work environment impacts staff health, safety, and well –being. It is important to thoroughly assess your work environment for safety-related risk factors. This includes parking lots, entryways, reception areas, workstations, patient or resident rooms and/or classrooms, and offices. The specific type of assessment will vary in each environment, but every assessment will benefit from considering questions such as:

- Are there convenient, accessible emergency escape routes?
- Do staff members know what to do in the event of a life-threatening emergency?
- Are first-aid kits readily available?
- Is there a method to summon assistance that is reviewed and understood by all staff members?
- Is lighting adequate in all areas?
- Where could staff become isolated or be most vulnerable?
- Are procedures in place to report and resolve workplace safety concerns?
- Are all staff members well-trained in these procedures?
- Are all staff members encouraged and supported in discussing ways to create a safer environment whenever possible?

Care

Welfare

Safety

Security™

# CRISIS RESPONSE

## EMPLOYEE / SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES

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- Remain Calm / Follow Instructions
- Be Observant
- Seek Medical Attention
- Secure the Facility
- Protect the Crime Scene
- Get Witness / Customer Information
- Secure Video Tapes
- Record in Writing Your Statement



# Creating a Safe and Caring Work Environment

## *Promoting Care, Welfare, Safety, and Security*

### *Encourage and Promote Courteous Interactions*

Whether you are interacting from a position of authority or not, make it a priority to do so with courtesy. Even if your polite behavior is not immediately reciprocated, this will help foster an environment that values mutual respect among all individuals. Communicate values throughout your organization to:

*Care*

*Welfare*

*Safety*

*Security™*



# Creating a Safe and Caring Work Environment

## *Promoting Care, Welfare, Safety, and Security*

*Care*

*Welfare*

*Safety*

*Security™*

- Be certain staff at all levels understand expectations relating to courtesy.
- Encourage leadership to model respectful attitudes and behavior.
- Embrace and value the diversity of your co-workers and those in charge.
- Respect everyone's privacy.
- Expect the best from every staff member—and from yourself.
- Develop staff resources for dealing with personal problems that may interfere with job performance.
- Utilize respectful supervisory practices in dealing with staff discipline.
- Recognize that staff attitudes and behaviors impact the behavior of others.
- Handle grievances thoroughly and promptly.
- Provide staff with information and development opportunities to improve understanding of their role in promoting polite and courteous interactions.



# Summary

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- ◆ **Work from a mindset of awareness**
  - ✦ Don't ignore Behaviors of Concern
    - Will not go away and can escalate
  - ✦ Learn how to recognize and diffuse potentially violent situations
  - ✦ Alert supervisors to concerns
  - ✦ Report all incidents

# HOW TO RESPOND

## WHEN AN ACTIVE SHOOTER IS IN YOUR VICINITY

QUICKLY DETERMINE THE MOST REASONABLE WAY TO PROTECT YOUR OWN LIFE. CUSTOMERS AND CLIENTS ARE LIKELY TO FOLLOW THE LEAD OF EMPLOYEES AND MANAGERS DURING AN ACTIVE SHOOTER SITUATION.

### 1. EVACUATE

- Have an escape route and plan in mind
- Leave your belongings behind
- Keep your hands visible

### 2. HIDE OUT

- Hide in an area out of the active shooter's view.
- Block entry to your hiding place and lock the doors

### 3. TAKE ACTION

- As a last resort and only when your life is in imminent danger.
- Attempt to incapacitate the active shooter
- Act with physical aggression and throw items at the active shooter

**CALL 911 WHEN IT IS  
SAFE TO DO SO**

## HOW TO RESPOND WHEN LAW ENFORCEMENT ARRIVES ON THE SCENE

### 1. HOW YOU SHOULD REACT WHEN LAW ENFORCEMENT ARRIVES:

- Remain calm, and follow officers' instructions
- Immediately raise hands and spread fingers
- Keep hands visible at all times
- Avoid making quick movements toward officers such as attempting to hold on to them for safety
- Avoid pointing, screaming and/or yelling
- Do not stop to ask officers for help or direction when evacuating, just proceed in the direction from which officers are entering the premises

### 2. INFORMATION YOU SHOULD PROVIDE TO LAW ENFORCEMENT OR 911 OPERATOR:

- Location of the active shooter
- Number of shooters, if more than one
- Physical description of shooter/s
- Number and type of weapons held by the shooter/s
- Number of potential victims at the location

## RECOGNIZING SIGNS OF POTENTIAL WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

AN ACTIVE SHOOTER MAY BE A CURRENT OR FORMER EMPLOYEE. ALERT YOUR HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT IF YOU BELIEVE AN EMPLOYEE EXHIBITS POTENTIALLY VIOLENT BEHAVIOR. INDICATORS OF POTENTIALLY VIOLENT BEHAVIOR MAY INCLUDE ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING:

- Increased use of alcohol and/or illegal drugs
- Unexplained increase in absenteeism, and/or vague physical complaints
- Depression/Withdrawal
- Increased severe mood swings, and noticeably unstable or emotional responses
- Increasingly talks of problems at home
- Increase in unsolicited comments about violence, firearms, and other dangerous weapons and violent crimes

# QUESTIONS

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## RESOURCES

<http://www.osha-safety-training.net/free.html>

<http://www.workplaceviolence911.com/>

<http://crimeprevention.rutgers.edu/crime/violence/workplace/prevention.htm>

<http://www.workviolence.com/resource/resource.htm>

# Workplace Safety & Violence Prevention



**The Jefferson City Police Department  
Thanks You for Your Participation  
In this Training Presentation**

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